

CPYRGHT

## Away From It All

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By Douglas Kiker

NEWPORT, R. I.

There are days when the fog moves in without warning, obscuring the faint, New England August sun, and there is not much else to do but to wrap up in a sweater, take a drink, thumb through an anthology of New Yorker short stories—trying to find one not written by a woman and which you have never read before—sit on a damp, lumpy couch with the children and watch the afternoon frug shows on television, and wonder:

What's going on back in Washington? What sort of mood is the President in these days? What is the atmosphere of the town? What's coming up?

It is supposed to be good to get away from it all occasionally and look at things from Long View Country. But the trouble is that there is no one to gossip with.

What really was behind that extraordinary session at the State Department last week, when the President told his diplomats that he wanted open discussions before international decisions were made—by three or four men in the Administration—but expected absolutely no dissent once those three or four men made those decisions?

How is Bill Moyers? A little nervous, or free-wheeling? ("My hedges are thick," a lady at a dinner party says, "because a fine old Scotch gardener has cared for them since the day they were put into the ground.")

Is the tide of optimism over the affairs of state roiling in, or sucking out at the White House? ("She was just a perfect Catherine," a lady informed my wife, speaking of a talented woman who takes leading parts at the Newport Players Guild.)

Who decided it would be a good move to leak the story all over Washington that the VC are hurting, at last? Defense? The White House? And is it true that CIA is upset by

*Joseph Alsop is on vacation. So, too, is Herald Tribune White House correspondent Douglas Kiker, who appears to be somewhat restless.*

the decision to allow Gen. Lansdale another chance in Viet Nam? ("Mr. Emerson leads Mr. Stolle in the third set, 5-3," the umpire at the Newport Casino announces. "New balls, please." And the lady in the "Lilly" whispers importantly, "Do you realize he hasn't broken his service yet?")

Is the format of the fall White House conference on civil rights going to be changed because of the Los Angeles riots? It was designed as a real think session, but now maybe they will want some fireworks. ("We had a big old place here, but we gave it up. Too much bother," the lady in the Pucci pants says.)

And how are George Reedy's hammer-toes? And how is Bob Novak's new baby girl? And who persuaded the President to pull out all those letters he's been carrying around in his coat pocket for months, and publish them as a sort of a gray paper entitled, "Why Viet Nam?" "She and the two children are staying with her parents at Hammersmith Farm. They'll be there through August," some one who doesn't know Mrs. Kennedy any better than I do informs me.)

Did Reston run into Breslin at Chu Lai? Is Dick Goodwin going to go, or stay? And who in town this August is being asked to come along and join the fun and games on those late afternoon boat rides down the humid Potomac with Mr. Johnson aboard the Money Fitz? ("I guess he's doing a good job, but he just doesn't appeal to me. What do you think of him, seriously?" the young Newport real estate tiger asks.)

How now, Jack Valenti?

Any more speeches in the works? Marvin Watson? Rufus Youngblood? What's the latest rumor on travel? Will it be the ranch this week end, or Camp David? ("Actually, the farther you get away from Washington, the more you tend to defend him, because from this point both his virtues and his failings are obscured. They tend to get all turned around," I say vaguely. "How's business with you?")

A rainy day, ("If I'm out of my mind, it's all right with me, thought Moses Herzog," I read) is followed by a sunny one, when the surf is big and clear and the sand is hot, and in the freshening afternoon breeze the Lightnings fly across Narragansett Bay. (How is the new budget shaping up, and when will we begin to learn how much extra the increased effort in Viet Nam is costing? Is the President getting through to Ayub Khan, or am I just reading between the lines?)

The baby boy crawls in your lap, smelling of salt, his nose freckled, his swim suit dripping, and says, "Daddy, put it down (the latest issue of Time, that is) I want to whisper to you a minute." (Who has the White House got working behind the scenes on the steel strike?)

Guests are on the way. The charcoal needs lighting. "Make some drinks, dear," the tanned wife urges. Vacation is midway. Mosquitoes and bumblebees, lotion and spinnaker, sand and clam, tennis and sun. Away from it all.

My, but it's nice. But what's going on in Washington? Has the President got John Connor in line? How is John Gardner settling in? Is he making plans to travel abroad this fall? What's happening to 14b? Give my regards to Pennsylvania Avenue. Remember me to Lafayette Square. They were out of New York papers again at the news stand today. When will